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GEELONG NATURALIST

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G.F.N.C.
P.O. Box 1047, Geelong

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Editorial

Jerringot - how do you like that for the name of a wetland reserve? The word has a pleasant ring to it, and comes from the local aboriginal word for "water-all-around".

At the February meeting of the GFNC it was moved that the name Jerringot be given to the Belmont Common Wetland Reserve, which the club manages. The reasons will become apparent when you read Mrs Lane's article "The hut on the mound", in this issue.

The Belmont Common wetland was a very important living site for the local Wathaurang aboriginal tribe. Sheltered from prevailing winds by a ring of hills from Mount Duneed to Newtown, abounding in waterbirds, fish and eels, its importance is shown by the size of the occupation mound that has become the site of a Sizzler restaurant.

Mrs Lane has researched the area thoroughly, taken levels and soil samples and a collection of artifacts, and has formally submitted the site to the Victoria Archaeological Survey.

The Geelong Field Naturalists Club has long recognized Belmont Common's significance as a wetland. We lease part from the City of South Barwon and have constructed a bird hide there and produced a pamphlet about it. We would like to extend the area of our lease, since important wetland areas nearby may be under threat from "recreational development". Mrs Lane's studies on the area as an aboriginal living-station add weight to our argument for its preservation in a natural state.

So - Jerringot, the Belmont Common wetland. I like it, do you?

Accounts of the Clubs 1991 safari to Cape York also appear in this issue. The trip was such a success that another safari to the Kimberleys in 1993 is at present being investigated. I have asked to be put at the top of the list. If you are interested please contact Dick Southcombe (Ph: 433916) or Gordon McCarthy (Ph: 431826).

Valda Dedman

The Hut on the Mound

by L. Lane

Aboriginal Living-stations were chosen very skilfully, keeping in mind the need for shelter and aliment, the two vital elements necessary for survival.

On arrival, the People cleared away any vegetation from the living-site and spread a layer of sand from a nearby stream, like a carpet, before constructing their shelter huts. By repeating this process over decades or centuries, the camping-site was built up, layer by layer, into an artificial hillock. The local Aborigines called this structure a *Mirrn:yong*. Such a man-hill is sometimes called an oven-mound.

Myrrn:yong(s) were always situated near fresh drinking-water and in a location which afforded a variety of resources for hunting and foraging. Here, the People would dwell awhile before itinerating to another Camping-station on their regular food-circuit about their domain.

****

Before Waurn Ponds Creek debouched into the Barwon, four hundred (400) metres south of where Foster Fyans was to construct the breakwater, it formed a series of meanders before it over-lipped the flood levee-bank of the greater stream.

A tributary of Waurn Ponds Creek joined it five hundred and fifty (550) metres west of the main junction.

This minor stream formerly drained a lake situated near the (future) Barwon Bridge and flowed roughly parallel to Barwon Heads Road which was first constructed (about) 1848. The carriageway was called Mt. Colite Road, in those early days, *Colite* being the corruption of the term, *Kolo:et,* a reference to the brackish water in the Barwon River Estuary and, by association, with Barwon Heads Bluff.

This stream defined the western margin of Barwon Valley Common.

****

According to the Rev. William Wakefield's Word-list, collected from *Wathaurung*-Tribespeople in 1839/40, this productive area was called *Jeering:et* which meant "Water-all-around". This might be better interpreted as "The Place of Billabongs".

William Buckley, the "Wild White Man", who lived among the indigenes from 1803 to 1835, before white invasion, commented upon this same geographical feature. By the time John Morgan heard what he called the place and forced the name into the straight-jacket of English orthography, it appeared, in Buckley's biography, as *Jerringot*. The anglicization of the term subtly altered the cadence of the spoken word.

****

That portion of the Barwon Common leased by the Geelong Field Naturalists Club as a wildlife sanctuary was formed, originally, by the subsidiary stream which collected several short tributaries from the escarpment of Waurn Ponds limestone. The course of this stream was modified by a drain which passes to the east of South Barwon Council Depot on the north-east corner of Breakwater and Mt. Colite Roads and the Recreation Reserve on the opposite corner.

Buckley averred that *Bunyips* were often seen in that area by the Tribespeople who entertained a lively dread of the monsters, believing them to have supernatural powers.

They were supposed to be able to cause death, disease or misfortune: as well, they had a taste for human flesh.

The great abundance of eels in the vicinity was believed to have been ordained by *Bunjil,* the Creator, more particularly for the *Bunyip(s)*, though humans also trapped them for food. Many a feast of *Boonea*, baked in ashes, was consumed on the *Myrrn:yong* overlooking *Jerringot.*

****

In 1864, a triangular block of Crown Land, between Bailey Street and Mt. Colite Road was set aside as the South Barwon Borough animal pound. The Pound-warden's domicile was subsequently erected on the *Myrrn:yong*. Meals were enjoyed, in that hut, for over a century.

In 1990, Queen Elizabeth II granted this block to the Mayor and Council and the Citizens of South Barwon City.

The Pound-warden's old cottage was demolished to make way for the *Sizzler* Restaurant which is being erected on the self-same spot and is due to be open in April, 1992.

The denizens of Geelong (and others) will still feast in the *Hut on the Mound.*

****

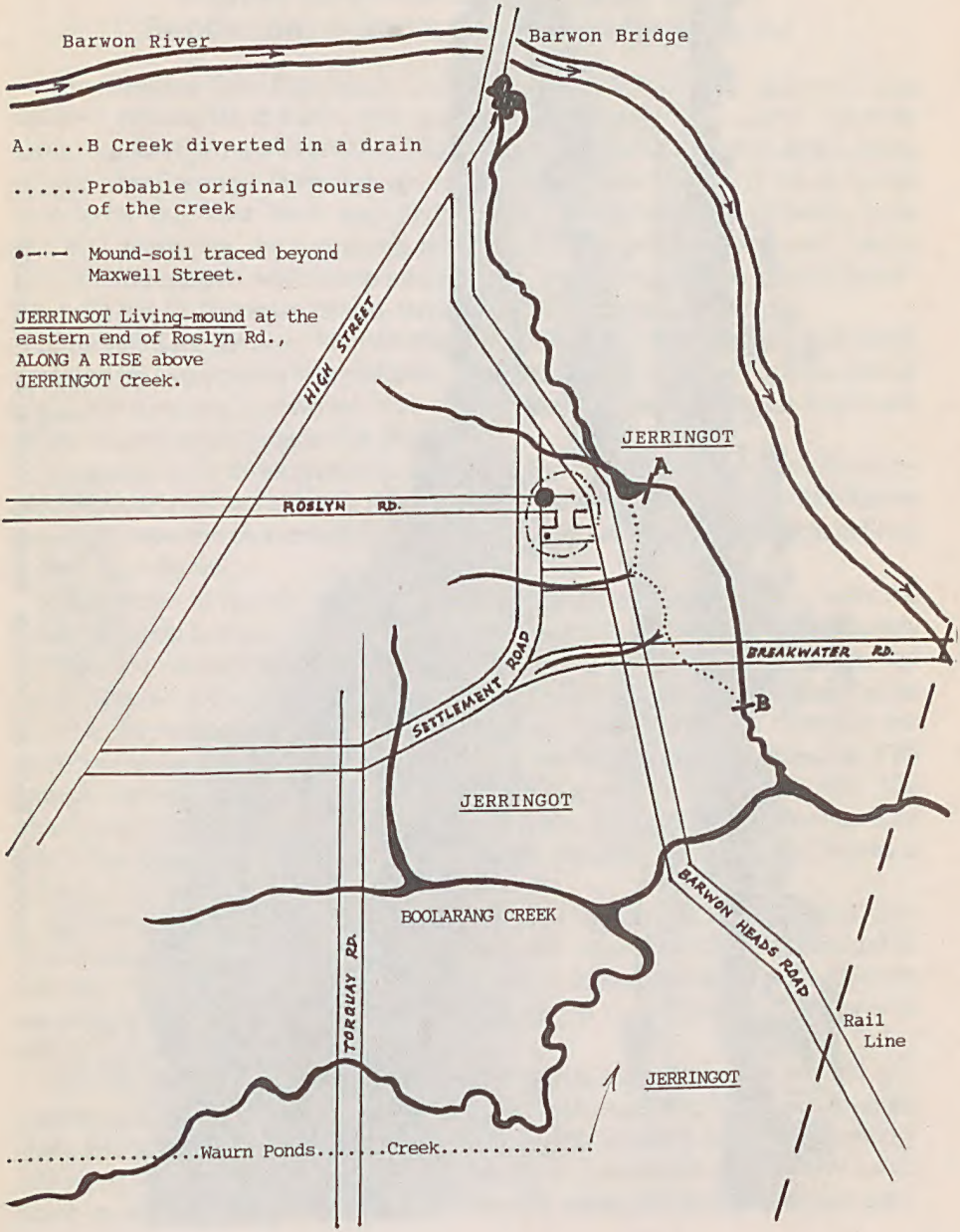
Meantime, why don't we call the fossil-stream *Jerringot* in memory of Buckley and the Wathaurong-folk who tolerated Murronghurk's existence among them. They considered him to be the spectre of a dead clansmen.

OR

Perhaps we should offer a reward for the first person to photograph a *Bunyip* at *Jerringot*. It is understood, now, that the "mythical, malign creature" was merely an adventurous leopard-seal *(Hydrurga leptonix)* which, driven onto the mainland by violent weather conditions, had migrated from its natural habitat, the ocean, up-river from the coast.

L. Lane
Barkly Street
East Geelong

JERRINGOT WATER SYSTEM



Jerringot – Belmont Common wetland. Photo: Trevor Pescott

G.F.N.C. 1991 Cape York Safari

August 18-September 8 (Safari north)
September 8-September 30 (Safari south)

The Geelong Field Naturalists Club chartered *Wild Country Safaris* to take fourteen naturalists to Cape York and Thursday Island from Cairns and then return back to Cairns with another fourteen. The rendezvous was at Jacky Jacky airstrip near Bamaga. Three light aircraft from Hinterland Aviation took us on this wonderful four hour each way part of this trip. Eighteen participants were G.F.N.C. members, the remaining ten were from Hamilton, Deniliquin, Tweed Heads, Hughenden, Melbourne and Ballarat. The cost Cairns-to-Cairns including boat trip to Thursday Island, ferries and aircraft was $1900 pp.

Our safari leader was Alan Mulder, a barefooted bushman and naturalist, assisted by Lyn and his two children, Eri and Dan, who travelled in the cabin of our 1965 ex-army four wheel drive truck. Following was the tucker truck with driver Murray and Darlene our cook.

The safari took three weeks to reach the Top. The main diversions from the North-south road were four nights at Iron Range and three nights at Shelburne Bay, both near the east coast of the peninsula, and another three nights at Shell Creek near Bamaga.

Cape York peninsula is triangular in shape (larger than Victoria) with the Great Dividing Range on the eastern side. The main (and only) road generally runs on the western slopes of the ridge following the overland telegraph line north. The terrain to Laura is generally rocky and undulating with many large rivers to be ferried and forded, but from Laura to the Cape few changes are encountered except when crossing rivers. The road is graded gravel and as straight as possible. The vegetation is open monsoonal forest, dry with little change, except for thin rainforest corridors along the deep beach-like rivers by which we invariably camped and stopped for lunch as far from other humans as possible.

The most intriguing features on the entire main road were the ant plants *Myrmecodia sp.,* the living fossil cycad palms *Cycas media,* pandanus palms, green tree ants *Oecophylla smargdina* (when the ants were dislodged and settled in the sleepy passengers loft, they created sharp response), and of course termites.

Termites were everywhere. They built red nests five and a half metres high, overhanging round yellow nests, three metre high magnetic (north-south) grey nests and some were sharply conical. Eucalyptus forests turned red or yellow with nests which entirely encased the tree with a microscopic fine layer of sand. Some nests were high up in trees. Termites were certainly the most con-

spicuous feature of the safari. They ate through our seats, packs and equipment. Large nests were out on the exposed rocks of Cape York and the Torres Strait islands.

The extreme overuse of wildfire was a disappointing feature of the entire safari; the Torres Strait islands were also ablaze. The heathland and the great white sand dunes of Shelburne Bay, the monsoonal eucalypts which cover most of the area, the rainforests at Iron Range, and the tip of Cape York were being burnt and destroyed by accidental fires lit by tourists and others, and by traditional aboriginal "farming", National Parks officers, and most of all by graziers attempting to change this sandy peninsula into grazing land. The effect of constant burning is not being studied or understood.

Terrestrial animals were rare indeed. We saw fifty head of cattle on the entire safari of 1800 km, six kangaroos or wallabies, including one Agile Wallaby, *Macropus agilis*. Feral pigs were common. We spent twenty five hours spotlighting to see one Northern Quoll *Dasyuris hallucatus,* one Bandicoot, three Sugar Gliders *Petaurus breviceps.* However fruit bats and insectivorous bats were common, feeding in the flowering paperbarks Melaleuca sp. around our river camps.

Reptiles were rare also. We saw one Large Sand Monitor *Varanus gouldii,* one Mangrove Monitor, *Varanus indicus,* one Soft-spined Gecko *Diplodactylus williamsi,* several Two-lined Dragons *Diporiphora bileata,* one Large Blue-tongued Lizard *Tiliqua scincoides,* 500 mm. long. Snakes seen were one Scrub Python *Liasis amethystinus,* one Children's Python *Liasis childreni*, one Black-headed Python *Aspidites melanocephalus,* one unidentified brown snake (Taipan?), one Brown Tree Snake, *Boiga irregularis*, one Blind Snake. We also saw one marine turtle and one Estuarine Crocodile *Crocodylus porosus.*

Frogs were rare also. Burrowing Frogs *Cyclorana novaehollandiae* and Rocket Frogs *Litoria nasuta* were found around our camp on the Wenlock River. By contrast the dreaded Cane Toad was common all the way to Shelburne Bay, even right up on top of those huge white sand dunes. In fact on a large shallow pristine wetland the only life form seen or heard was millions of Cane Toad tadpoles.

Despite all the ravages of fire and Cane Toads Shelburne Bay was a marvellous, exciting place. The beach at the White Pointer, where the south east trade winds have blown a 180 metre white dune into the sea, was an untouched wilderness. On the hot beach with an incoming tide, great mullet 600 mm long were in large numbers, with other fish. Many sharks one metre long were in 300 mm of water and a large brown shark three metres long was patrolling in one metre of water. Agile-tailed stingrays were right at the edge. Mud crabs and whelks were common in the sandfly-infested mangroves, as were hermmit

Broken Axle, Daintree Road. Photo: Diana Primrose

Waterhole in the middle of the road – near Bamaga. Photo: Diana Primrose

crabs, birds, reptiles. The water was inviting but no one went for a swim. The hot saline swamps were alive with spiral mud whelks all about 100 mm long. The exposed, blinding sand bars supported hundreds of waders kept alert by both the Greater and Lesser Frigate Birds gliding overhead.

We were privileged to be one of the first groups to visit this area. It will have to be rescued from the current land management practices and joined to the nearby Iron Range National Park to ensure it remains a wonderland.

One cannot comment on the Cape York Peninsula without describing the wonderful rainforests of Iron Range National Park. This tiny area supports a confined population of many species and animals. The birds call almost all day long. (They do have a two hour lunch break, whereas in the dry country the birds call only in the morning). Birding is exhausting with a light-proof canopy made up of an infinite variety of trees (not eucalypts), vines and epiphytes, making visual identification difficult. Once away from roads and clearings, the rainforest is surprisingly open underneath and many trees are deciduous, giving a European autumn appearance with a thick carpet of fallen leaves, which when wet is quiet to walk on, but after a hot day every bird and animal makes a racket when scratching around.

Was it the Shining Starlings near the Eclectus Parrot smugglers' tree that gave us all a dose of that incessant 'scrub itch' in the most inconvenient places, or the "Coca Cola" river we drank from and swam in at Shelburne Bay? You remember those cuppas when nobody knew whether the tea had actually been thrown in the billy!

Cape York's isolation is over. Will it be worth visiting in the future, with thousands of four wheel drive vehicles roaming freely, litter accumulating over the tracks and campsites? Exploding populations of traditional people hunting land and sea with anything but traditional weapons or vehicles. Miners and landholders clearing, burning and changing the vegetation. Erosion of the fine sandy leached-out soils. Feral populations of cane toads, pigs, and cattle, introduced invasive plants competing with the indigenous vegetation must only hasten the demise of the genetic diversity, particularly of the rainforest which is virtually non-existent.

In conclusion - a thoroughly enjoyable and memorable experience was provided by our great Club. We thank Dick and Shirley Southcombe for initiating and organizing the whole safari.

Graeme Tribe

Cape York Birds

The emphasis was on quality rather than quantity. I think most of the "Birdos" had written out a list of "required" birds they wanted to see. The actual number of species recorded was not high, but we did see a large number of the species restricted to Cape York. A disappointment was not seeing the Golden-shouldered Parrot, but not for want of searching, but the nesting season was past, and the birds obviously dispersed to find food.

Some of us had our own "misses" that were seen by other members, such as Rufous Owl seen by Rod Bird, Northern Scrub Robin, White-browed Robin, seen by Rohan Bugg. But overall we were satisfied.

Cape York is such a large area of diverse habitats that many species are restricted to certain areas. e.g. the Golden-shouldered Parrots are restricted to where there are suitable termite mounds for nesting. Others are found only in the lowland rainforest of Iron Range and New Guinea, others through the dry country of the Laura Basin and the lagoons of Lakefield National Park, which we visited only briefly.

The following birds are not in checklist order, and does not record every bird seen by all members of the party.

Figbird	Seen in all rainforest areas where there are fig trees
Spangled Drongo	Isolated occurrences in most areas
Sacred Ibis	Around Cairns and Lakefield
Straw-necked Ibis	Around Cairns and Lakefield
Striated Heron	Coastal mangroves
Great Egret	Lakefield and Cairns
Pacific Black Duck	Lakefield and Cairns
Peaceful Dove	Common
Whistling Kite	Common
Welcome Swallow	Common
White-rumped Swiftlet	South of Cooktown
Willie Wagtail	Common
Magpie Lark	Common
Rainbow Lorikeet	Common
Brown Honeyeater	Common
Yellow Honeyeater	Odd birds
Noisy Friarbird	Mainly Cairns to Coen
Royal Spoonbill	Near Cairns
Pacific Heron	Near Cairns
Brown Cuckoo-dove	One only south of Daintree

Yellow Oriole	Daintree and all forest areas, heard more often than seen
Brahminy Kite	Coastal areas
Yellow-breasted Sunbird	Common
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Common
Mistletoebird	Common
Pied Currawong	Reasonably common
Rufous Fantail	Rainforest
Bar-shouldered Dove	Common
Fairy Gerygone	Not common, rainforest along rivers
Northern Fantail	One, Bloomfield River
Bowers Thrush	One, Bloomfield River
Silvereye	Common
Brown Gerygone	Cairns-Cooktown
Pheasant Coucal	Seen from vehicle, behind Cooktown
Papuan Frogmouth	Three at Cooktown
Leaden Flycatcher	Common
Common Sandpiper	Several on beaches
Chestnut-breasted Mannikin	Flock at Cooktown
Sacred Kingfisher	Common
Silver-crowned Friarbird	Cooktown area
Brush Turkey	Rainforest
White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike	Common
Red-winged Parrot	Common
Yellow-spotted Honeyeater	Fairly common
Rajah Shelduck	Several on lagoon in Lakefield N.P.
Green Pygmy Goose	Several on lagoon in Lakefield N.P.
Jacana	Several on lagoon in Lakefield N.P.
Darter	Several on lagoon in Lakefield N.P.
Little Pied Cormorant	Several on lagoon in Lakefield N.P.
Forest Kingfisher	Fairly common
Little Egret	On lagoon (not common)
White-throated Honeyeater	Widespread
Pied Butcherbird	Widespread
Black-backed Butcherbird	Laura-Coen area
White-breasted Sea Eagle	Few sightings
Rufous Night Heron	Few sightings
Torresian Crow	Common
Banded Honeyeater	One, Laura area
Blue-faced Honeyeater	Common
Pale-headed Rosella	Several, Laura area

Yellow-breasted Sunbird, Daintree. Photo: Gordon McCarthy

Comb-crested Jacana, Lakefield. Photo: Gordon McCarthy

Red-tailed Black Cockatoo	Several, Laura area
Olive-backed Oriole	Widespead
Little Friarbird	Not common
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	Common
Kestrel	Reasonably common
Squatter Pigeon	Two small flocks, Laura
Wedge-tailed Eagle	Very few
Masked Finch	Small flocks around Coen
Bronze-winged Pigeon	Odd birds around Coen area
Blue-winged Kookaburra	Common from Coen on
Laughing Kookaburra	Common
Emerald Dove	Odd birds in rainforest
Scrub fowl	Common in rainforest
Cicadabird	Pair, Iron Range
Green-backed Honeyeater	One, Iron Range
White-throated Gerygone	Odd birds
Cisticola	Widespread
Red-browed Pardalote	One nesting near Laura
Brown-backed Honeyeater	Several along rivers
Double-barred Finch	Several small flocks around Coen
Black Kite	Around Coen
Little Eagle	Around Coen
Galah	Around Coen, common
Great Bowerbird	Coen and Shelburne Bay
Red-browed Finch	Widespread
Graceful Honeyeater	Widespread
Shining Flycatcher	Riverine forest
Bridled Honeyeater	One, Wenlock River
White-faced Robin	Along creeks, Iron Range
Magnificent Riflebird	Iron Range and Lockerbie scrub (different calls)
Large-tailed Nightjar	Fairly common
Little Shrike-thrush	Common Iron Range
Eclectus Parrot	Two nesting pairs, Iron Range
Red-cheeked Parrot	Several pairs, Iron Range
Frilled Monarch	Odd birds, Iron Range
Spectacled Monarch	Odd birds, Iron Range
Osprey	Odd birds and pair Thursday Island
Grey-crowned Babbler	Isolated parties
Red-capped Plover	Albatross Cove, Iron Range
Large Sand Plover	Albatross Cove, Iron Range

Red-necked Stint	Albatross Cove, Iron Range
Tawny-breasted Honeyeater	Several recorded
Spotted Catbird	Jungle areas
Manucode	Iron Range
White-streaked Honeyeater	Only two or three recorded
Grey Thrush	Common
Palm Cockatoo	Common in restricted areas
Fig Parrot (race marshalli)	Iron Range
Shining Starling	Nesting colony, Iron Range
Yellow-breasted Boatbill	Several, Iron Range
Grey Whistler	One, Iron Range
Azure Kingfisher	Creeks, Iron Range
Wompoo Pigeon	Heard and seen wherever rainforest
Lemon-breasted Flycatcher	Fairly common towards Top End
Grey Goshawk	One only
Oriental Cuckoo	One only Shelburne Station
Black Butcherbird	Odd birds
Lovely Wren	Small isolated parties
Mangrove Robin	One Shelburne Bay, mangroves
Varied Honeyeater	One Shelburne Bay, mangroves
Little Curlew	One Shelburne Bay, mangroves
Masked Lapwing	Throughout
Beach Thick-knee	Pair, Albatross Cove
Whimbrel	Shelburne Bay
Little Tern	Shelburne Bay
Greater Frigatebird	One, Shelburne Bay
Lesser Frigatebird	Several
Curlew Sandpiper	Shelburne Bay
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	Shelburne Bay
Silver Gull	Common on coast
Bar-tailed Godwit	Shelburne Bay
Great Knot	Shelburne Bay
Reef Heron	Shelburne Bay
Pied Oystercatcher	Shelburne Bay
Collared Kingfisher	Mangroves, Shelburne Bay
Jabiru	Nesting, one young, Shelburne Bay
Brush Cuckoo	One, Shelburne Bay
Rainbow Bee-eater	Common migrating southwards
Red-backed Wren	Parties, Shelburne Bay
Tawny Grassbird	Odd birds, Shelburne Bay
Bustard	Two, Shelburne Station

Australian Pratincole	One near Heathlands Ranger Station
Yellow-billed Kingfisher	Pair, McDonald River, also Iron Range
Marbled Frogmouth	Heard at Jardine River and pair seen on ground
Tawny Frogmouth	Spotlighted near Jardine River
Intermediate Egret	One only
Black-breasted Buzzard	Jardine River
Fawn-breasted Bowerbird	Pair with bower near Bamaga
Rufous Whistler	Common
Brown Goshawk	Odd birds
Broad-billed Flycatcher	One, Thursday Island
Brown Booby	One, near Thursday Island
Wedge-tailed Shearwater	One, near Thursday Island
Rufous Owl	One, Shelburne Station
Northern Srcub Robin	One, Iron Range
White-browed Robin	One, Iron Range
Bush Thick-knee	Cairns Cemetery

Gordon McCarthy

Bush Thick-Knee, Cairns Cemetery. Photo: Gordon McCarthy

A Botanical Saunter through Cape York

by a Novice "Planto"

Cape York was a very different botanical experience for us, with so many species of flora we had not previously encountered. Alan Mulder, our leader/driver, was a very knowledgeable botanist; however our party had only a general "holiday appreciation" of the flora around us and did not undertake any serious listing of plants.

The vast majority of the peninsula is covered with savannah woodland and open forest, with smaller areas of rainforest. The dominant species of eucalypt is the stringybark *(Euc. tetrodonta)*, although on our first day out the eucalypt that attracted our attention was the White Gum *(Euc. alba)*, with its beautiful white bark and distinctive leaves.

A stop in the Daintree, to mend a snapped axle, gave the first view of the spectacular bloom of the Golden Bouquet Tree *(Deplanchea tetraphylla)* high up in the forest. We were to see this tree spasmodically all the way north, with a stunted specimen flowering beautifully on the sand dunes of Shelburne Bay.

Our camp on the first night, by the Bloomfield River, was near a stand of huge, very European-looking, deciduous trees - the Leichardt Tree *(Nauclea Orientalis)*. The thick layer of leaf mulch beneath them was reminiscent of an English forest floor. The wood of these trees is termite resistant - very useful in a climate where the little monsters bore holes through a tent floor in one night!

The Cooktown Botanic Gardens gave us our first sighting of the Ant Plant *(Genera Hydnophytum* and *Myrmecodia)* - a very strange, almost orchid-like, epiphytic plant growing high up in a tree. This unusual bulbous plant when cut open reveals an intricate network of hollow galleries similar to a termite mound. Several species of small ants live in the plants - hence the name. They were to become a very familiar sight all the way. In the gardens were some fine examples of the Long-leafed Paperbark *(Melaleuca leucadendron)* -a huge paperbark which on first appearances looked more like a gum tree to our southern eyes. We were to see these magnificent trees along the water courses on our journey north. Paperbarks are a favoured host of the ant plant.

At old Laura Station Homestead (which is being restored) was a magnificent specimen of the Black Orchid *(Cybidium canaliculatum)*. This was growing about 3 metres up in a eucalypt in the middle of the old cattle yards.

Two very common plants along the way were the Toothbrush Grevillea *(Grevillea pteridifolia)*, and the Broad-leaved Tea Tree *(Melaleuca viridiflora)* with its bottlebrush flowers ranging in colour from cream to greenish yellow to pink or deep red.

The "Bushman's Clothespegs" were interesting. These woody seed pods of *Grevillea glauca* split open when dry to release the seed. The almost spherical wooden pod when split open on one side forms a very handy clothes peg! One of our party can vouch for this - I believe his normal pegs were left in Geelong!

There was great excitement as we were settling into our camp on Brown's Creek - one of our members had found our first Pitcher Plants *(Nepenthes mirabilis)*! The next morning we walked ahead of the trucks, wandering in the heathland beside the road where the Pitcher plants were growing in abundance. These spectacular plants of prey were to become a common sight in damp areas, the vines scrambling along at ground level, twining around shrubs, and even climbing up quite big trees near Bamaga. 'The Book' tells me that the "Pitchers" are modified leaves of this carnivorous plant, formed into large hollow vessels partially filled with digestive fluid and capped with a lid to keep the rain out. Unsuspecting insects slip into these pitchers, which may be 15-20 cms long, and provide the plant's food source.

In the Iron Range area we saw the Red Beech *(Dillenia alata)* with its beautiful yellow flower and bright red calyx. which after petal fall looked like a pretty flower itself. Some of us were tricked by this on first appearances, then we noticed both 'flowers' on the same tree! The bark is a lovely deep red papery texture not unlike paper bark. Some 'bush tucker' we tried were the fruits of the native Lasiandra *(Melastoma affine),* which turned our mouths temporarily purple. On the rainforest floor we occasionally saw the beautiful deep pink bell-shaped flower of the huge native Kapok tree *(Bombax ceiba)*, and the orange leguminous flowers of the Black Bean Tree *(Castanospermum australe).* Binoculars were the best way to see these flowers 'in situ' in the canopy.

A beautiful example of *Hoya macgillivrayi* was pointed out to us – a large deep purple Hoya flower hanging high above us over a rainforest road. The vine *Luffa cylindrica* is very aptly named with the small cylindrical fruits containing an inner fibrous material similar to the larger 'Back scrubber' variety (*Luffa aegyptiaca).* When the fruits' dry the outer shell comes away, revealing the loofah. There were many varieties of palm, including the Mangrove Palm *(Nypa fruiticans)* which had to trunk, the fronds growing straight out of the ground. It had gigantic cycad-like seed pods.

The huge leguminous seed pod of the Matchbox Bean *(Entada phaseoloides)* contained the biggest bean seeds we had seen - about 4cm square. These seeds were washed up in large numbers on the beach at Albatross Cove at Iron Range. They are brown and polish up to a beautiful sheen when carried in a pocket. They were apparently used as matchboxes by the early settlers. The native Cardamon was different, with its small flower being at ground level at the base of

the plant. We were fascinated by the huge Fig Trees *(Ficus Sp.)* with the fruits growing at various sites up the tree, in bunches straight out of the trunk, the fig parrots delight! The Stinging Tree *(Dendrocnide excelsa)* with its heart shaped leaves is doubtless the most feared plant in the forest. Anyone stumbling across one of these shrubs experiences excruciating pain for weeks, something to be wary of in the rainforest, and something we thankfully did not encounter.

As we approached Shelburne Bay we saw a number of specimens of the Cooktown Orchid *(Dendrobium bigibbum)*, and the Yellow Tea Tree *(Neophribetia myrtifolia).*

At our last camp out of Bamaga we were treated to a beautiful specimen of the Bottlebrush Orchid *(Dendrobium smilliae)* about 1 metre off the ground in a low shrub. Earlier in the trip people had gone to great lengths to photograph these orchids high up in the trees!

Cape York has a wealth of interest for the holiday "planto" and for the serious botanist.

Diana Primrose

Camp on Windmill Creek, Artemis Station. Photo: Diana Primrose

Mt Baw Baw Campout

January 21-27, 1992

by Graeme Tribe

(Previous Baw Baw campouts were held in 1971, 1973, 1974, 1983, 1988)

Twenty adults and seven "juveniles" attended our alpine spring campout at Baw Baw. We 'camped' in Club Adski, a well-appointed 42 bed ski lodge with sauna etc. for $10 adult. Most people arrived during Friday afternoon, a few arriving as late as 2 a.m. in heavy fog.

At 8.30 a.m. Saturday morning we walked north, over the saddle to Mt. St. Phillack and down to the large treeless spaghnum bog called Mustering Flat. The alpine vegetation was ablaze with flowers to greet the perfect sunny day. Birds, skinks and insects were common on this 15km walk. Thirty bird species were seen. Mustering Flat contains all the plant communities found on the plateau and the numerous spaghnum waterholes contained large numbers of tadpoles.

By contrast, Sunday was wet, then cold and foggy, and we stayed close to the alpine ski tows for safety reasons. A disappointing feature here was the introduction of exotic grasses to rehabilitate the ski slopes. Cattle were evident by the deep tracks in delicate areas.

In the afternoon we walked four and a half kilometres down the bitumen road below the clouds to *Newlands* one thousand feet lower. The dramatic change in vegetation and animal life is impressive and contrasting. Spotlighting down this road revealed six Bobucks (mountain brushtail possums) amongst the tall mountain ash, and one Common Brushtail amongst the snowgums. Many small bats were also seen.

The evening's entertainment (apart from eating, drinking, talking and reading from an extensive library on alpine natural history) was a navigational talk (map and compass reading), a slide presentation, astronomy, spotlighting and of course numerous games (cards, scrabble etc).

Monday morning we walked around Mt. Baw Baw again in perfect weather, with wildflowers and scenery at every step. The last of our group departed by 1.30 p.m. after cleaning the lodge and saying how pleased they were that they could come.

Baw Baw Plant List

Family		
Asteraceae	*Celmisia asteiifolia*	Silver Daisy
Droseraceae	*Drosera arcturi*	Alpine Sundew
Asteraecae	*Erigeron pappocromus*	Violet Fleabane
Myrtaceae	*Eucalyptus pauciflora*	Snow Gum
Scrophulariaceae	*Euphrasia glacealis*	Glacial Eyebright
Liliaceae	*Herpolirion novaezelandiae*	Sky Lily
Lycopodiaceae	*Lycopodium fastigiatum*	Mountain Club Moss
Asteraceae	*Lepterhynchos squamatus*	Scaly Buttons
Apiaceae	*Oreomyrrhis eriodopa*	Australian Carraway
Asteraceae	*Olearia*	Large-leaf Daisybush
Oxalidaceae	*Oxalis magellanica*	Snowdrop (White) Wood Sorrel
Campanulaceae	*Pratia pedunculata*	Trailing Pratia
	Poa	Snow Grass
	Polystichum proliferum	Mother Shield Fern
Plantagineae	*Plantago europhylla*	Plantain
Orchidaceae	*Prasophyllum alpina*	Alpine Leek Orchid
"	*Prasophyllum suttonii*	Mauve Leek Orchid
"	*Pterostylus sp.*	Alpine Greenhood
Labiatae	*Prostanthera cuneata*	Alpine Mint Bush
Labiatae	*Prostanthera lasianthos*	Christmas Bush
Scrophulariaceae	*Parahebe derwentiana*	Derwent Speedwell
Scrophulariaceae	*Parahebe sp*	Milfoil Speedwell
	Pentachondra pumila	Carpet Heath
Asteraceae	*Podolepis robusta*	Alpine Podelepis
Epacridaceae	*Richea continentis*	Candle Heath
Ranunculaceae	*Ranunculus collinus*	Strawberry Buttercup
Sphagnaceae	*Sphagnum cristatum*	Bog Moss
Asteraceae	*Senecio linearfolius*	Fireweed Groundsel
"	*Senecio pectinatus*	Alpine Groundsel
Stylidiaceae	*Stylidium graminifolium*	Grass Triggerplant
Goodeniaceae	*Scaevola hookeri*	Creeping Fanflower
	Tasmannia xerophila	Alpine Pepper
Violaceae	*Viola hederacea*	Ivyleaf Violet
Asteraceae	*Helichrysum acuminatum*	Alpine Everlasting
"	*Helichrysum secundiflorum*	Cascade Everlasting
"	*Helichrysum stirlingii*	Ovens Everlasting
Geraniaceae	*Geranium antororsum*	Alpine Geranium
Campanulaceae	*Wahlenbergia sp.*	
Papilionaceae	*Hovea sp.*	
"	*Bossiaea foliosa*	Leafy Bossiaea
Myrtaceae	*Baeckea gunniana*	Mountain Baeckea
"	*Eucalyptus regnans*	Mountain Ash
Rutaceae	*Correa lawrenciana*	Mountain Correa
Liliaceae	*Stypandra caespitosa*	Tufted Lily
Thymelaeacae	*Pimelea alpina*	Alpine Rice-flower
"	*Pimelea sp*	
Asteraceae	*Helichrysum hookeri*	Scaly Everlasting
Rosaceae	*Acaena anserinifolia*	Bidgee Widgee
Liliaceae	*Dianella tasmanica*	Tasman Flax-Lily
Lycopodiaceae	*Lycopodium australinifolia*	Fir Club Moss
Aspleniaceae	*Aspleniaceae flabellifolium*	Necklace Fern

Blechnaceae	*Blechnum pennamarina*	Alpine Waterfern
Liliaceae	*Arthropodium milleflorum*	Pale Vanilla Lily
"	*Astalia alpina*	Pineapple grass
Orchidaceae	*Thelymitra venosa*	Veined Sun Orchid
Araliaceae	*Polyscias sambucifolius*	Elderberry Panax
Asteraceae	*Helichrysum thyrsoideum*	Sticky Everlasting
Epacridaceae	*Epacris petrophila*	Snow Heath
Fabaceae	*Platylobium formosum*	Handsome Flat-pea
Gentianaceae	*Gentianella diemensis*	Mountain Gentian
Hypericaceae	*Hypericum japonicum*	Matted St. John's Wort
Proteaceae	*Orites lancifolia*	Alpine Orites
Clathraceae	*Aseree rubra*	Starfish Fungus
	Thamnolia vermicularis	Alpine Thamnolia Lichen
Apiaceae	*Diplaspis hydrocotyle*	Stiff Diplaspis
Lamiaceae	*Westringia senifolia*	Alpine Westringia

Birds observed along Moorabool and Barwon Rivers from the Cement Works Fyansford to Princes Bridge Belmont 1987-1991

by Ira Savage

Australasian Grebe
Coot
Great Cormorant
Little Black Cormorant
Large Pied Cormorant
Little Pied Cormorant
Pacific Heron
White-faced Heron
Cattle Egret
Rufous Night Heron
Royal Spoonbill
Pacific Black Duck
Grey Teal
Australian Hobby
Australian Kestrel
Buff-banded Rail
Dusky Moorhen
Spotted Turtle-Dove
Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo
Long-billed Corella
Purple-crowned Lorikeet
Little Lorikeet
Crimson Rosella
Eastern Rosella
Red-rumped Parrot
Pallid Cuckoo
Fantailed Cuckoo
Sacred Kingfisher
Welcome Swallow
White-winged Triller
Creted Shrike-tit
Willie Wagtail
Clamorous Reed-Warbler
Grass Wren
Brown Thornbill
Yellow-rumped Thornbill
White-plumed Honeyeater
New Holland Honeyeater
Silvereye
European Goldfinch
European Greenfinch
House Sparrow
Common Starling
Common Mynah
Blackbird
European Thrush
Australian Magpie-lark
Australian Magpie
Pied Currawong
Australian Raven
Common Mynah
Willie Wagtail
Pied Currawong

Ira Savage
Heytesbury Street,
Herne Hill

For Juniors

My Bird

Last time I suggested you adopt a particular bird species for study and I said I had chosen the Red Wattlebird, which is very common in my garden.

Wattlebirds regularly visit the bottle feeders which are on the fence outside my kitchen window, and overhung by a large liquidamber tree.

Now, it's amazing what you can see when you're carrying out a boring task! Whilst mopping the floor the other day I was disturbed by a wattlebird commotion (I know their calls now) and looked up to see an adult scolding a juvenile and pecking it angrily in the chest. The young one (quite large, but with no red wattles and only a hint of yellow on the belly) adopted a servile attitude, then called peevishly again, only to provoke more attacks from the adult. It cringed, then hid in the leaves while the adult flew to the bottle, had a good drink and flew back into the tree.

The youngster stayed in my view and eventually hopped sideways along the top of the fence and after some indecision hopped on top of the bottle and started pecking at the metal ring which holds it. It had a go at the top of the bottle also; however, since it received no sweet reward, it soon gave up and flew away, followed by the adult.

Now, how long will it take that bird to learn that the sugar solution drips from the bottom of the bottle? It obviously didn't watch the adult very carefully.

I hope a few of you have adopted-a-bird. If so, do you have any stories about yours? Please write and tell me how you are getting on.

Valda Dedman

Mystery Photograph Solution

The photo on page 48 of the last issue was of eels migrating at Buckleys Falls. The Short-finned Eel spawns at sea, passing from a larval stage *(lepto cephali)*, through to juveniles *(glass eels)*, develop into pigmented elvers in the river estuary and then migrate upstream to the headwaters or to swamps, lakes and dams on the way. When they reach maturity they migrate downstream and back to the ocean. The aborigines took advantage of the eels' movement, sometimes constructing elaborate stone traps.

SYLLABUS 1991/92

FEBRUARY 1992

4 General meeting. "Small Macropods" – John Seebeck.

5 Plant Group Excursion. Urquart's Bluff – Leader: Pat Quinlivian (Ph: 430209)

11 Plant Group Meeting. "Alpine Vegetation" – Cecily Lawrie & Bev McNay

16 Excursion. Marine Biology Cruise. Leaders: Barry Lingham (Ph: 554291) & Les Barrow (Ph: 443379)

25 Bird Group Meeting. "Australian Bird Count" – Lorraine Phelan.

MARCH

3 General meeting. "Black Rock's Environs" Peter Ashton.

7/9 V.F.N.C.A. Campout. Venue to be announced.

10 Plant Group Meeting. "Wildflowers of the West" – Winston & Carlene Huggins

14 Juniors Group. Flora & Fauna Discovery Walk. Steiglitz area. Leader: Grant Baverstock (Ph: 817256)

15 Excursion. Werribee Sewerage Farm. Leaders: Margaret Cameron (Ph: 299792) & Trevor Pescott (Ph: 434368).

24 Bird Group Meeting. "Thornbills" – Barry Lingham

APRIL

7 Annual General Meeting. Members Night

14 Plant Group Meeting. "Gene Pools" – Graeme Stockton

19 Excursion. Northern Bellarine Peninsula. Leaders: Dave King (Ph: 593023) & Betty Quirk (Ph: 512996)

28 Bird Group Meeting. "Wetlands for Birds" – Pauline Reilly.

MAY

5 General meeting. "Local Terrestrial Mammals – Barbara Wilson et al

7 Thursday evening Excursion. Deakin Biology Laboratory. Leader: Valda Dedman (Ph: 432374)

12 Plant Group Meeting. "Buckleys Falls Revegetation" – Tony Woolford

17 Excursion. Morrisons. Leaders: Roy Whiteside (Ph: 433279) & Stan Rowe (Ph: 212837)

26 Bird Group Meeting – To be announced

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